

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

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R 241210Z AUG 77
FM AMEMBASSY VICTORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0517
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI
AMEMBASSY PORT LOUIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L VICTORIA 0509

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SE
SUBJECT: LOCAL MERCHANT DISAPPEARS

SUMMARY: ON NIGHT OF AUGUST 13 A LOCAL MERCHANT, KNOWN TO BE A
SUPPORTER OF EX-PRESIDENT MANCHAM, MYSTERIOUSLY DISAPPEARED. HE
IS GENERALLY BELIEVED TO HAVE BEEN KIDNAPPED AND MURDERED. DESPITE
VIGOROUS POLICE INVESTIGATION, CASE HAS NOT YET BEEN BROKEN. EMBASSY
RECENTLY RECEIVED CREDIBLE REPORT THAT ARMY MAY HAVE BEEN RESPON-
SIBLE. IF TRUE, IT RAISES INTERESTING QUESTIONS ABOUT EMERGING
POLICE-ARMY RELATIONSHIP AND ABOUT WHO, IF ANYONE, ORDERED THE
MERCHANT'S REMOVAL. END SUMMARY.

1. ON EVENING OF AUGUST 13 LOCAL BUSINESSMAN OF INDIAN ORIGIN,
HASSAN URMARJI IBRAHIM (KNOWN HERE AS HASSANALI) VANISHED. LAST
SEEN AT HIS HOUSE AT 7:00 PM, HIS ABANDONED CAR WAS FOUND SHORTLY
THEREAFTER WITH LIGHTS ON AND RADIO PLAYING ON MAIN ROAD JUST
OUTSIDE OF VICTORIA. HASSANALI IS (WAS) AN AVID SUPPORTER OF
DEPOSED PRESIDENT MANCHAM. BARCLAY'S BANK MANAGER TOLD CHARGE
AFTER DISAPPEARANCE THAT HASSANALI HAD RECENTLY BEEN REPEATEDLY
GUILTY OF INDISCRETIONS IN DISCUSSING COUNTER-COUP POSSIBILITIES
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IN PUBLIC PLACES.

2. THE POLICE ARE CLEARLY MAKING CONCERTED EFFORT TO FIND OUT
WHAT HAPPENED. ACCORDING TO ACTING BRITISH HIGH COMMISSIONER
HINTON, POLICE COMMISSIONER PILLAY HAS PUT ONE OF ABLEST
INSPECTORS ON CASE AND HAS DETAILED BRITISH POLICE ADVISOR TO
ASSIST IN ALL ASPECTS OF INVESTIGATION, INCLUDING INTERROGATION.

IN ADDITION, PILLAY ON AUGUST 17 OFFERED SUBSTANTIAL REWARD FOR INFORMATION LEADING TO DISCOVERY OF HASSANALI'S WHEREABOUTS. EARLY LAST WEEK, PILLAY TOLD CHARGE THAT HE REGARDED SOLVING THIS CASE AS MATTER OF URGENCY, SINCE MANY PEOPLE THINK GOVERNMENT WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR HASSANALI'S DISAPPEARANCE, BUT THAT IT WAS JUST NOT TRUE. HE SUBSEQUENTLY TOLD HINTON THAT HE HAD SPECIFICALLY RULED OUT THE ARMY AS POSSIBLE PERPETRATORS. PRIVATE CHATS WITH OTHER HIGH CIVIL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS HAVE REINFORCED IMPRESSION THAT POLICE INVESTIGATION IS GENUINE AND IS NOT A COVER-UP.

3. THIS NOTWITHSTANDING, THERE IS NOW REASON TO BELIEVE THAT IT WAS, IN FACT, THE ARMY WHICH BROUGHT ABOUT HASSANALI'S DISAPPEARANCE. A SEYCHELLOIS WIFE OF AMCIT TRACKING STATION EMPLOYEE RECENTLY TOLD TRACKING STATION COMMANDER LTC BEVERIDGE THAT SHE HAD BEEN INADVERTENT EYE-WITNESS TO KIDNAPPING, WHICH, SHE SAID, WAS CARRIED OUT BY GROUP OF MEN DRESSED IN JUNGLE FATIGUES (FATIGUES WERE ISSUED TO ALL ARMY RECRUITS AFTER JUNE 5 COUP). SHE DID NOT BRING THIS IMMEDIATELY TO ATTENTION OF POLICE FOR FEAR OF RETALIATION AND EVEN CONSIDERED LEAVING SEYCHELLES FOR PERIOD OF TIME. NONETHELESS, POLICE EVIDENTLY LEARNED SHE HAD INFORMATION BECAUSE SHE WAS INTERROGATED AT LENGTH AUGUST 24. POLICE, THEREFORE, NOW KNOW THAT PERPETRATORS WORE ARMY CLOTHES, WHICH MAY CHANGE NATURE OF INVESTIGATION.

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4. IF, INDEED, KIDNAPPING WAS PULLED OFF BY ARMY, IT WOULD APPEAR LOGICAL THAT IMPETUS FOR IT CAME EITHER FROM PRESIDENT RENE, MINISTER FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS BERLOUIS, OR FROM SOME SELF-CONSTITUTED GROUP OF POLITICAL VIGILANTES WITHIN ARMY. WHILE POSSIBILITY PRESIDENT ORDERED OR KNEW ABOUT KIDNAPPING CANNOT BE DISCOUNTED, IT SEEMS HIGHLY UNLIKELY. THIS SORT OF ACT IS TOTALLY OUT OF KEEPING WITH EVERY ASPECT OF JUNE 5 REVOLUTION WITH WHICH HE HAS BEEN ASSOCIATED. IF HASSANALI HAD TO BE NEUTRALIZED DUE TO HIS POSSIBLE INVOLVEMENT IN COUNTER-COUP OPERATIONS, SAME RESULT COULD HAVE BEEN ACHIEVED BY ARRESTING HIM. THIS APPROACH WOULD HAVE BEEN CONSISTANT WITH RENE'S HUMANIST PHILOSOPHY AND EFFECTIVE AT SAME TIME.

5. IF BERLOUIS ORDERED HASSANALI'S REMOVAL, IT WOULD BE FIRST INSTANCE OF ARMY SERVING AS HEAVY-HANDED POLITICAL POLICE. IF HE DID IT WITHOUT PRESIDENT'S KNOWLEDGE, IT SUGGESTS HE EITHER HAS PRIOR AUTHORITY TO TAKE SUCH STEPS, OR SUFFICIENT POWER TO GET AWAY WITH IT. BERLOUIS IS A BIT OF AN UNKNOWN QUANTITY IN SEYCHELLES AND, THEREFORE, IS SOURCE OF SOME CONCERN TO MANY PEOPLE. ONLY 26 YEARS OLD., HE SPENT THE LAST 5 YEARS IN TANZANIA OSTENSIBLY AS SPUP EXTERNAL REPRESENTATIVE, BUT

ACTUALLY RECEIVING MILITARY TRAINING, AND IS BELIEVED TO BE MORE IMPATIENT FOR A SOCIAL CHANGE THAN PRESIDENT HIMSELF. WHILE HIS PERSONAL LOYALTY TO PRESIDENT IS UNQUESTIONED FOR TIME BEING, SOME BELIEVE THAT BY PLACING BOTH ARMY AND POLICE UNDER BERLOUIS' CONTROL, RENE HAS UNNECESSARILY EXPOSED HIMSELF TO INFLUENCES WHICH COULD BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON BERLOUIS A LITTLE FURTHER DOWN THE PIKE.

6. POSSIBILITY THAT GROUP OF ARMY RECRUITS TOOK SITUATION INTO OWN HANDS WITHOUT REGARD TO CONSTITUTED AUTHORITY IS EQUALLY UNSAVORY. AS PREVIOUSLY REPORTED, RECRUITS WERE DRAWN FROM MILITANT SPUP CADRES. EMBASSY LOCAL EMPLOYEE ASSERTS THAT SOME OFF-DUTY RECRUITS HAVE BEEN PUSHING THEIR NEW FOUND WEIGHT AROUND VICTORIA STYLING THEMSELVES AS "LEADERS OF THE CONFIDENTIAL

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REVOLUTION." SOME INDIVIDUALS EXPRESS CONCERN THAT THESE RECRUITS , PARTICULARLY WHEN ARMED, REPRESENT UNCONTROLLABLE ELEMENT THE LIKES OF WHICH SEYCHELLES HAS NEVER BEFORE EXPERIENCED. PRIOR TO COUP, THERE WAS ANOTHER "DISAPPEARANCE" WHICH IS NOW BEING SPECULATED WAS PERPETRATED BY SAME PEOPLE BEFORE THEY HAD ANY OFFICIAL STATUS.

7. IT WILL BE REVEALING TO OBSERVE WHAT POLICE NOW DO WITH INVESTIGATION. PURSUING IT DILIGENTLY COULD IMPLICATE BERLOUIS. MORE LIKELY, IN OUR VIEW, IT WOULD INVOLVE ARRESTING SPUP MILITANTS NOW IN ARMY, WHO HELPED IN COUP. GOVERNMENT MAY IN FINAL ANALYSIS NOT WISH TO TAKE ON MOST MILITANT OF ITS SUPPORTERS BUT THERE IS COMPETING NEED TO MAINTAIN PUBLIC ORDER. AT SAME TIME, PRIDE OF POLICE IS INVOLVED. THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT RIVALRY EXISTS BETWEEN ESTABLISHED POLICE FORCE AND NEW ARMY, ALTHOUGH INTENSITY OF FEELING IS NOT KNOWN. HOWEVER, UTILIZATION OF ARMY AS POLITICAL POLICE FORCE ,OR CRIMINAL EXCEESES BY ARMY RECRUITS WHICH GO UNPROSECUTED WOULD CLEARLY NOT SIT WELL WITH POLICE. BUT THERE DOES NOT APPEAR MUCH THEY COULD DO ABOUT IT.

FELDER

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TAGS: PINT, SE
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